

REMARKS

Claims 1–23 are pending in the application. Claims 1–19 were presented in the divisional application as filed. Claims 1, 10, and 19 are independent claims. Claim 20, which depends from independent claim 1, was added in the Reply mailed on March 3, 2003. Independent claims 21 and 23, along with claim 22, which depends from claim 21, are newly added with this Reply.

Rejections Under § 112

Claims 4–9 and 13–18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, ¶ 2, as being indefinite. Specifically, the Examiner stated that it is unclear whether the recitation of “an external shoulder” or “an internal shoulders” in these claims referred to the shoulder of the pin and/or box member recited in claim 1. The above amendments clarify the limitations in claims 4–9 and 13–18. This amendment is not made for reasons of patentability, and no new matter is added. Accordingly, withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

Rejections Under § 103

Claims 1–19 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 4,317,585 (“Boice”) in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,192,553 (“Blose”). This rejection is respectfully traversed because, in view of the above amendments, the cited art does not teach or suggest all of the limitations found in the independent claims.

Claim 1, as amended, recites a threaded pipe connection including a pin member having external threads increasing in width in one direction and a box member having external threads increasing in width in an opposite direction so that complementary internal and external threads move into engagement upon final make-up of the connection. The connection also includes a wear indicator that projects from at least one of the group consisting of a shoulder of the box member and a shoulder of the pin member.

The other independent claims pending in the application recite similar limitations. Currently amended claim 10 is a method claim that recites a corresponding limitation. Claim 19 recites a means for indicating connection wear, corresponding to the structures disclosed in the specification.

Boice teaches an angular deformation indicator. The indicator comprises "X" marks located on two flat surfaces at either end of a section of pipe. The "X" marks are located on circumferential surfaces that are parallel to the axis of the section of pipe. These surfaces are not "shoulders," as that term would be understood by a person having skill in the art. Moreover, the indicator of Boice does not project from any shoulder, as is required by the claims. Blose does not make up for these deficiencies.

Neither Boice nor Blose, whether considered separately or in combination, teach or suggest the claimed invention. Thus, claims 1, 10, and 19 are patentable over the cited art. Dependent claims are patentable for at least the same reasons. Accordingly, withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

Restriction of Claim 20

Claim 20, which was added in a reply mailed on March 3, 2003, was constructively elected under MPEP § 821.03 because it added a limitation that was not originally presented. The applicant respectfully submits that this restriction is improper.

Section 821.03 of the MPEP cites 37 C.F.R. § 1.145, which states that an applicant will be required to restrict the claims if the applicant presents claims that are "directed to an invention distinct from and independent of the invention previously claimed." Claim 20 depends from claim 1, and it adds a limitation that further defines the wear indicator recited in claim 1. This limitation is not at all "distinct from and independent of" claim 1 as filed. Accordingly, the Applicant respectfully requests that claim 20 be reinstated and considered on its merits.

Additionally, claim 20 is patentable because it depends from claim 1, which has been shown to be allowable over the cited art. Moreover, claim 20 recites a circumferential extension. A circumferential extension is not taught or suggested in Boice, and Blose does not make up for this deficiency.

New Claims

New claims 21–23 are added in this Reply. Claim 21 is an independent claim that recites a pin member having external threads increasing in width in one direction and a box member having internal threads increasing in width in an opposite direction so that complimentary internal and external threads move into engagement upon make-up of the connection. Claim 21 also recites a wear indicator that extends from a shoulder of the connection, wherein connection wear is indicated by contact between the wear indicator and an opposing shoulder of the connection.

Claim 23 recites a method of determining connection wear that includes rotationally engaging a pin member and a box member, wherein a wear indicator extends from at least one of the group consisting of a shoulder of the box member and a shoulder of the pin member. The method also includes inspecting the connection to determine if the wear indicator is in contact with the other of the shoulder of the box member and the shoulder of the pin member, when the connection is made-up.

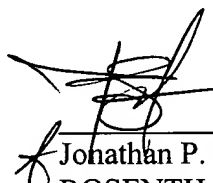
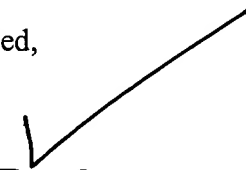
Neither Blose nor Boice, whether considered separately or in combination, teach or disclose the limitations recited in these claims. Thus, the Applicant submits that newly added claims 21 and 23 are allowable over the cited art. Dependent claim 22 is allowable for at least the same reasons.

CONCLUSION

Applicant believes this reply to be responsive to all outstanding issues and place this application in condition for allowance. If this belief is incorrect, or other issues arise, do not hesitate to contact the undersigned or his associates at the telephone number listed below. Please apply any charges not covered, or any credits, to Deposit Account 50-0591 (Reference Number 09432/168002).

Date: 7/24/03

Respectfully submitted,

 
#45,079
Jonathan P. Osha, Reg. No. 33,986
ROSENTHAL & OSHA L.L.P.
1221 McKinney Street, Suite 2800
Houston, Texas 77010
Telephone: (713) 228-8600
Facsimile: (713) 228-8778

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